CD 2008--112-113

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

David Briskin, conductor
Luri Lee, violin

Friday, November 28, 2008
7:30 pm. MacMillan Theatre

Program

Overture to *Candide* — **Leonard Bernstein** (1918-1990)

Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77 — **Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897)
Allegro non troppo
Adagio
Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

Luri Lee, violin

- INTERMISSION -

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 (From the New World) — **Antonín** Dvořák (1841-1904)
Adagio - Allegro molto
Allegretto
Largo
Scherzo: molto vivace
Allegro con fuoco

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
David Briskin, conductor

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Program Notes

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918-1990)
Overture to *Candide* (1956)

"Are Candide's Adventures at an End?" asked a headline in the *New York Times* almost one year after the death of Leonard Bernstein. The feature review was discussing his December 1989 "final, authorised version" of *Candide*, Bernstein's comic operetta based on a satire by the 18th century French writer Voltaire on the philosophy of optimism. Too much of an opera for Broadway (it closed after its 1956 début after a modest 73 performances), too much of a stage show for the opera house, Bernstein's original two-act show was to undergo at least seven different versions before Bernstein arrived at his own definitive version. (Its recording in London's Abbey Road studios by the sick composer, who was to die within a year, could itself provide material enough for a Broadway musical).

Through a multitude of cuts, an entirely rewritten book, revisions, rescorings, and rewritings of its music, the one constant has been the overture. This orchestral showpiece was a success from the start. It has remained one of the most performed American orchestral pieces in the half century since its concert première by the New York Philharmonic, with its then assistant composer-conductor on the podium. An opening fanfare is followed by an exuberant cancan, part Offenbach, part Prokofiev of the *Classical Symphony*. A third theme is broader and more lyrical – and eminently singable, as befits a love duet ("O Happy We") between the two lead characters. The overture essentially follows a traditional path, building towards Bernstein's highly effective take on a Rossini crescendo, using one of the best-known songs from the show, "Glitter and Be Gay," minus its stage coloratura. A quick review of the main themes and the overture is ended.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77

If the 19th century was the century of the piano concerto, it is surely because many of its leading composers were themselves pianists. When they turned their pens to violin concertos, it is remarkable how many of them took advice from performers. Tchaikovsky gave one of his young violinist composition students his own concerto page by page as he wrote and carefully paid attention to his feedback. Bruch consulted with several leading violinists of the day, including Joachim and Sarasate, while writing his three concertos and the Scottish Fantasy. And Brahms turned to his colleague and friend Joseph Joachim, just two years older than himself, but an altogether more worldly and suave musician. Joachim was an intellectual violinist who dedicated himself to the interpretation of great music without aspiring to add to it.

The choice of Joachim was central to Brahms's concept of the violin concerto. In it, virtuosity is not grafted onto the music; it grows from within the music. Its musical invention is of symphonic breadth and character and the soloist plays second fiddle to this, as it were. The Polish violinist-composer Henryk Wieniawski, to whom Brahms also showed his score, wrote it off as unplayable. The conductor, Hans von Bülow, another friend, quipped that while Bruch had written a concerto *for* the violin, Brahms had written one *against* it. (A later violinist, Bronislav Huberman, won this particular war of words when he described the Brahms as "a concerto *for* violin *against* orchestra - in which the violin *wins!*"). Joachim, however, displayed no attitude and continued to collaborate with Brahms and help polish the concerto, even after they jointly gave the work's first performance at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, January 1, 1879. "You will think twice before you ask me for another concerto!," Brahms wrote to Joachim. "It's a good thing your name is on the copy; it should make up for your having so little to say in the violin part!"

The collaboration, if a little one-sided in Brahms's favour, was sufficiently fruitful for Brahms to entrust the first movement cadenza to Joachim. The tradition of leaving the cadenza for the soloist to improvise had virtually died out since Beethoven; Brahms was always keen to find ways in which he could bind his own music to the traditions of the past. Joachim's cadenza soon became so intimately connected with Brahms's concerto that it is usually the one heard to this day. The concerto looks back to classical practice in another way - by keeping the first appearance of the soloist in reserve until the orchestra has presented much of the material

of the first movement. When the violin does appear, it presents a variation of the first theme, in the minor key, later introducing a new theme of its own. Throughout, the treatment is symphonic, orchestra and soloist taking an equal share in the working-out of themes. Indeed, the extensive correspondence with Joachim shows that Brahms initially planned the work in four movements - like a symphony - rather than the customary three. Soon, however, the middle two movements were removed (the scherzo was later drafted into the Second Piano Concerto) and Brahms substituted what he called a "feeble Adagio."

This "feeble" slow movement opens with one of the classical repertoire's great tunes, not on violin, though, but on oboe. When the soloist does take up the melody, it is elaborated and made more idiomatic to the string instrument. The movement artfully disguises itself as a free-sounding meditation on this magnificent leisurely melody. The finale presents another aspect of Brahms's idiom - the Hungarian gypsy style which he learned in his youth from the violinist Eduard Reményi. In spirit, the music resembles Brahms's own Hungarian Dances. Its exuberance contrasts well with the serious tone of the opening two movements and serves as an homage to the work's patient collaborator, Joseph Joachim.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)
Symphony No. 9, in E minor, op. 95 (From the New World)

In Dvořák's Carnegie Hall box for the première of the *New World* symphony on December 16, 1893 were his wife, his eldest daughter and two favourite American composition students. Here was an opportunity for them to see how the spirit of American indigenous music could be woven into and inspire a symphonic work from the European tradition. "The country is full of melody, original, sympathetic, and varying in mood, colour and character to suit every phase of composition," Dvořák had written in a letter to the *New York Herald* the previous May. The American newspapers had been full of anticipation as to what the Czech composer could accomplish. Also present in Dvořák's box was Jeanette Thurber, a wealthy philanthropist, often viewed as the first American patron of music, who had chosen the acclaimed Czech composer as the "big name" to head her National Conservatory of Music. Its mission was to cultivate American musical idioms and help establish a national voice in its art music, comparable with that of Dvořák's Bohemian music and that of the other European countries. A guaranteed salary of $15,000 with a four month vacation for composition was enough to entice Dvořák, now in his fifties, with a wife and six children to support. The première was a triumph, arguably the crowning point of Dvořák's career. Every movement was applauded. The *New York Evening Post* called Dvořák's Ninth "the greatest symphonic work ever composed in this country." Once published, conductors performed it throughout the world. Its popularity has continued to this day.

Many years before his three-year stay in the States, Dvořák had read Longfellow's *Hiawatha* in translation. Once in New York, Thurber repeatedly asked him to write an opera on the subject. Nothing beyond a few sketches ever materialised, but Dvořák did say that the scherzo movement of the symphony was suggested by an episode from the poem. The slow movement was traditionally said to have been associated with the forest funeral of Hiawatha's bride Minnehaha. More recently, musicologist Michael Beckerman has argued for the landscape surrounding the long homeward journey of Hiawatha and Minnehaha. The scherzo is known to be linked with Pau-Pau-Keewis's dance ceremony at Hiawatha's wedding feast. But Dvořák was a confirmed cultural nationalist and his curiosity in the music of the New World went deeper than the indigenous American music he may have heard during his first eight months in New York City.

In New York he listened to black spirituals and plantation chants sung to him by Harry Burleigh, a black baritone, then a student at the Conservatory. (Burleigh was to have a distinguished career as a recitalist and arrange many spirituals for Paul Robeson). Dvořák also listened to plantation songs by Stephen Foster. As they made use of modal scales with which he was familiar, they had the dual attraction of strangeness and familiarity, arousing both curiosity and homesickness. So it is perfectly possible that the first movement's G major flute theme could sound to a later generation like a part-reminiscence of *Swing low, sweet chariot* (which Harry Burleigh first pointed out) and a Czech folk tune, at the same time. Others have pointed out its resemblance to *The Alabama Coon*, a plantation song popular in the music-halls of the Nineties. Similarly, the slow movement, whether a funeral lament for Minnehaha, a long journey, or an echo of anything else, could also be heard as an expression of longing for the composer's homeland. Its beautiful *cor anglais* melody, the

loveliest of many original melodies that abound in the symphony, has even been mistaken for the "folk song" *Goin' Home* - which is doubly ironical since the song's folk status arose only after William Arms Fisher (1861–1948), one of Dvořák's pupils and teaching assistant at the Conservatory, added words to Dvořák's original melody and published it as *Goin' Home*.

Dvořák had already added fuel to the debate, in an interview with the *New York Herald* May 21, 1893, by saying that black melodies must be the foundation of any school of composition to be developed in the United States. Then he unwisely compared black spirituals with indigenous American native music and found them similar. Boston composers criticised his views of the New World as naïve. But Dvořák intended the felicitous title *From the New World* (Z Nového světa), which he added to the score just before he delivered it to the Philharmonic, as an homage to his host country. "I should never have written the symphony I have if I hadn't seen America," he later reflected. What saves Dvořák's masterpiece from becoming a victim of its time and charges of stereotyping and cultural appropriation are its glorious tunes and natural symphonic flow. He gives the work unity through numerous thematic cross-references between its four movements, none of which needs to be observed consciously. They work effortlessly to fulfil their function and contribute to one of the glories of romantic symphonic writing.

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Alain Trudel, conductor
Wagner: Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde*
Kevin Lau: *Fountain of Dreams* (student composition competition winner)
James MacMillan: *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* (Jamie Drake, solo)
Debussy: Nocturnes
Friday, January 31, 2009
7:30 pm. MacMillan Theatre. $18 ($10 seniors/students)
Box Office: 416-978-3744

Biographies

A conductor renowned for the versatility of his repertoire and the depth of his musical interpretations, **DAVID BRISKIN** has been the Music Director and Principal Conductor of The National Ballet of Canada since 2006. In July 2008, he was appointed Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music and Conductor of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Prior to his appointment with the National Ballet, Mr. Briskin served as conductor with American Ballet Theatre for seven years, leading performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York's City Center and in major opera houses throughout the world. Mr. Briskin is a regular guest conductor with the New York City Ballet, most recently appearing in Copenhagen. Recently, Mr. Briskin appeared with San Francisco Ballet's New Works Festival, celebrating the company's 75th anniversary and he will join the company again this season in Chicago, New York and San Francisco.

In addition to his work in dance, Mr. Briskin has enjoyed great success on the concert stage. He has conducted the Pittsburgh, Detroit, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Syracuse, Akron, Cincinnati Pops, and Singapore Symphony Orchestras; the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Juilliard Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica where he conducted the Latin American premiere of John Corigliano's monumental First Symphony. Equally at home in the opera house, Mr. Briskin's opera schedule has taken him throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe, including performances of *La Bohème* in Italy; with the Calgary Opera, Manitoba Opera, Opera Carolina, Opera Columbus, New England Conservatory, Sarasota Opera, and Lake George Opera. For six years he served as the Music Director of the Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra, conducting annual performances of Handel's *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall.

Raised outside of Boston, he attended the Indiana University School of Music and received a Bachelor of Music degree in orchestral conducting from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a Master's degree from Queens College, City University of New York.

LURI LEE is a fourth year Bachelor of Music student at the University of Toronto, studying with Erika Raum. She began her violin studies at age 6 in her native Korea, and attended the renowned Sunhwa Art Middle School, studying with Jong chul Kim and Young Hee Lee. She won first prize at the Korean National Youth Musician Competition (2001), and second prize at the Kigwang Music Competition (2001).

After moving to Canada in 2002, Luri attended the Royal Conservatory of Music and Harl Haig Secondary School, succesfully completing both the Young Artist Performance Academy Program and the Claude Watson Arts Program. Upon her high school graduation, Luri performed Beethoven's Triple Concerto with the Earl Haig Symphony Orchestra at the George Weston Recital Hall.

Luri has performed in master classes for such renowned artists as Mauricio Fuks, David Stewart, Annalee Patipatanakoon, Mark Fewer, Ian Swensen and Mayumi Seiler. She has also collaborated with Lorand Fenyves and performed chamber music with Steve Dann and Jean-Michel Fonteneau at the Domaine Forget Chamber Music Festival.

Recipient of numerous scholarships, Luri has recently appeared as concertmaster of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra. In 2007 she founded Trio Luna with fellow students Sophie Zhang and Andrew Ascenzo and won the University of Toronto's Felix Galimir Chamber Music Award. As part of the prize, the Trio attended the Banff Centre's chamber music residency program in the summer of 2008. In April, the Trio will perform on the Chamber Music Hamilton concert series.

Luri's recent accomplishments include winning third prize at the Canadian Music Competition in 2007, and performing Beethoven Triple Concerto with the York Region Symphony Orchestra in Markham Theatre as a member of Trio Luna.

Luri performs the Brahms Concerto tonight as a winner of the student concerto competition.

Orchestra

VIOLIN I
Han-Yu (Holly) Cheng
Wen Chia
Joyce Kim
James Kruspe
Luri Lee
Oriana Leman
Iain McKay
Jennifer Melvin
Takayo Noguchi, *concertmaster*
Eros Tang
Monica Westerholm
Jane Yang

VIOLIN II
Andreea-Madalina Arbone
Adriana Tascon
Katherine Avery
Maia Broido, *principal*
Matthew Chan
Chang Chen
Madeline Kapp
Aviva Lufer
Colin Repas
Natasha Rollings

VIOLA
Mohammed Abu Ramadan
Louisa Cornacchia
Megan Gilsenan
Dongmin Kim, *principal*
Inhye Park
Jane Prevost
Sarah Torrance
Emma Vachon-Tweney
Robin Wenglewick
Elaine Yang

CELLO
Amahl Arulanandam
Andrew Ascenzo
Brenton Chan
Jason Cho
Cydney Grogan
Bryan Holt, *co-principal*
Christopher Hwang, *co-principal*
Eriona Jaupi
Yeun Woo Kim
Mi So Mok

DOUBLE BASS
Joshua Bell
Michael Brough
John Deshman
Benjamin Finley
Alexander Kotyk
Samantha McLellan

FLUTE
Roseen Giles
Anna Kolosowski
Sara Moorhouse
Alberta Brown, *piccolo*

OBOE
Victoria Hong
Laura Roy, *English horn*

CLARINET
Yoo Jin Cha
Mark Dimitroff
Alixandra Haywood
James Tizzard

BASSOON
Shirley Chen
Rebecca Norman
Margaret Stephenson

HORN
William Callaghan
Elizabeth Lance
Anna Millan
Emily Rapson

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Marcel Sekine
Timothy Watson

TROMBONE
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Nicholas Mahon
Jolanta Miller

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Brian Graiser
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